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ABSTRACT

An overall view of the function of the middle-school staff is presented. Such aspects as teacher characteristics, number and kinds of personnel needed, criteria for certification, and personnel functions are discussed. Also included are brief, tentative job descriptions for the principal, the assistant principal, counselors, classroom teachers, and noncertified personnel. (JB)

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TEACHING IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

IMPLICATIONS CONCERNING CERTIFICATION AND FUNCTION

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TEACHING IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

IMPLICATIONS CONCERNING CERTIFICATION AND FUNCTION

Possibly the most important single phase of planning for the middle school conversion comes in the selection and use of the faculty and staff which will be charged with the responsibility of working with the students being served in the middle school. The highest degree of personal relationships and contacts will come from the student-teacher interactions which occur daily in the middle school setting. It is imperative, then, that great care be taken in the selection and use of the middle school staff.

In readings which deal with middle school certification and staffing, many facets are presented which were not previously encountered when staffing a traditional junior high school or elementary school. Within the realm of middle school education, we are attempting to accomplish what was expected of the junior high school, but which was often times never realized because of circumstances which prevailed in the past and still prevail in many instances. In the middle school of today, an attempt is being made to genuinely serve the boys and girls who have in many ways been forced into curriculum patterns which have been dictated by pressures from outside sources. A great amount of "lip service" has been given to the articulation practices of the junior high schools, but it is felt that in many cases real articulation is not achieved. Instead, the students are called upon at an early age to accept and overcome obstacles which are normally to be presented to students of high school age. It is hoped that

the middle school will make the transition from elementary to secondary school less painful and more meaningful for the students who are "crossing the bridge."

Not only in the middle school, but also the secondary and elementary schools, the acquisition of the best qualified personnel and their use in the school setting will have tremendous impact on the success or failure of the intended educational program. Because of the educational, social, emotional, and physical implications associated with the middle school student, probably at this level more than any other the teaching and non-teaching personnel employed will either assure success or spell defeat for the program and its desired aims. The staff will have the opportunity to do more for their students in this type of school organization than in any other simply because of the nature of the philosophy of middle school education.

When creating a staff for the middle school, there are certain criteria which should serve as guidelines in order to secure the personnel most likely to achieve success with the age group. In the field of educational research, time and expense have been used in order to find out the characteristics, needs, desires, learning patterns, etc , of the students in the middle school age group and it would seem likely that there should be some effort put forth to define some of the characteristics of the teachers who will be working with the students. It seems rather ironic to study the student body so closely and then in many cases staff the school on

the basis of administrative ease and/or the availability of prospective teacher personnel. In order to achieve a compatible relationship between students and teachers, the staffing of the school looms as truly a monumental task; one in which great care must be exercised

THe Teaching Staff

Most of the interplay and day to day confrontations which arise in the middle school come as a result of the face to face meetings of the students and their teachers. Certainly, in seeking the ideal situation, it would evidently be best to staff the middle school with personnel who are trained and certified in middle school education, or those who have had long experience in dealing with this age group. It was found in a recent survey, however, that only two (2) states presently offer middle school certification and only nine (9) others are presently considering certification in this area, Indiana not being one of the aforementioned states Although the problem is recognized in many states, no sweeping reforms are presently being considered. Because of this, it is necessary to seek alternative measures in staffing a middle school in order to obtain the best possible staff

Let us examine briefly at this time some of the characteristics which might be considered important for the middle school teacher If we cannot achieve the ideal situation of all middle school trained personnel, we must compensate by choosing those who best suit our needs A few of the

characteristics to be considered are: (1) Awareness of the middle school philosophy and a committment to that philosophy, (2) Flexibility and creativity must be stressed as there will be times, because of the newness of the program, when these two characteristics will play an important part in the success of the teaching experience. We often times expect our students to display these characteristics and disregard them for ourselves. (3) The teacher must have great empathy for the age group found in the middle school, almost to the point of being "super-sensitive" to the pre-adolescent. Only be possessing this trait can the teacher hope to identify with the students and overcome barriers which are too often found between the teacher and the student. (4) The teacher must possess a high degree of tolerance in dealing with this volatile, up-and-down group of young people. This calls for security in emotional status and a strength of conviction in the work being done. The "in-betweenager" is attempting, in ways, to free himself of adult dependence, but at the same time exhibits a need for some type of adult supervision. As contradictory as the statement sounds, this is the middle school student. (5) Personal appearance and physical health are two characteristics of importance. A dynamic person is required in order to simply "keep up" with the middle school student and also it is felt that personal appearance and clothes help the teacher to identify with the students. Good taste in clothing and grooming will go a long way with this age group as many of them are very conscious of fashions and trends in grooming.

Certainly other traits, common to good teachers in all fields of education, could be listed here. However, in order to achieve some brevity, yet clarity, these shall be the only ones listed at this time.

Number of Personnel to Employ

Prior to an examination of the certification and function of the teachers in the proposed middle school, it is felt necessary to present an actual proposed staffing count. The following recommendations are made for the middle school with an opening student population of 600.

a. One (1) Principal.

b. Two (2) Full time guidance counselors (one male and one female).

c. Seven (7) teachers for the sixth grade academic subject areas.

d. Twelve (12) classroom teachers for academic work in grades seven and eight (three each for language arts, social studies, science and math).

e. Six (6) specialists for the unified arts (two each for art, Home economics, and industrial arts).

f. Three (3) specialists for health and physical education.

g. Two (2) full time specialists for music.

h. One (1) specialist in charge of the IMC (with a part time aide when financial feasible).

i. One (1) teacher for the special education program.

j. One (1) teacher for foreign language.

k. One (1) teacher for typing and/or business.

l. One (1) part time teacher for agriculture.

m. Three (3) persons to work as secretary (1) and teacher's aides (2).

n. Three (3) persons for the custodial work.

o. Cafeteria help as the need dictates.

It is assumed the members of the pupil personnel services such as speech and hearing specialist, attendance officer, health officer, social worker, etc., will be assigned to include the middle school in their work schedules.

Certification

Insofar as certification is concerned, the following criteria might be considered for the proposed Franklin Middle School:

Sixth Grade Academic Teachers

1. Elementary training with a major area of interest comprising approximately 24 hours of work.

2. It is hoped the areas of interest can be found in balance so that team teaching will be possible by choice of the teachers.

Seventh and Eighth Grade Academic Teachers

1. Two possibilities present themselves in this area. One would be to use elementary certified persons with the area of interest (24 hours). The other would be to use secondary trained persons in their major fields. It is felt that there might be a blend of both types in the middle school with success.

2. The most important criteria will be genuine interest in the pre-adolescent and a committment to the middle school philosophy. The choice of elementary or secondary will not have as much importance as the interest of the teacher in the child.

Specialist Teachers for Grades Six, Seven, and Eight

1. It would be best to have persons in these areas who

are certified both in elementary and secondary levels. This would be certification from kindergarten up to and including grade twelve. This recommendation is made on the basis of the great range of student abilities and interests.

2. Approximately sixty (60) hours of work and student teaching or teaching experience in the grade levels shall constitute the criteria in this area.

3. In foreign language, typing, and agriculture the secondary certificate will prevail. It is felt that these people should have some preparation, though, for dealing with the middle school students. Either work in formal preparation or in-service type training must be involved.

Special Education

1. This person shall have an endorsement for Special Education as outlined under bulletin 400

Librarian

1. The Librarian shall have any certificate or endorsement in Library Science.

Counselors

1. The counselors for the middle school shall possess at least a School Counselor's certificate or a certificate for Director of Guidance.

Principal

1. The Principal shall possess a School Administration and Supervision Certificate.

Other Personnel

1. Non-certified personnel shall possess qualities which would enable them to work successfully in the middle school setting. Criteria shall be governed by the school corporation.

Personnel Functions in the Middle School

Not only is it important to secure the best possible combination of teachers for the middle school according to certification standards, but it is equally important to use the personnel as profitably as possible, once employed. By using care in teacher assignments, it is felt that a higher degree of competency can be achieved from the staff. The function of the middle school staff is seen as following these presented procedures:

1. Principal

   a. The building principal shall be responsible for implementing and carrying out the duties as outlined in the Administrative Handbook of the Franklin Community School Corporation.

   b. He shall be the educational leader of the school and will be responsible in such areas as: (1) Personnel and curriculum, (2) Communication, (3) Finances, (4) Scheduling, (5) Clerical and other supportive non-certified staff members, and (6) school discipline.

2. Assistant Principal

   a. Although there is not presently found a designated listing for such a person in the proposed middle school, it is recommended that one of the staff members be designated, at least part time, to carry on limited duties of an Assistant Principal. His responsibility shall mainly incur in the absence of the Principal, or as need dictates.

3. Counselors

   a. The functions of the Guidance counselors have been previously prepared and are listed in the "Plan for a Middle School," Franklin Community School Corporation, submitted in June, 1970.

4. Classroom Teachers

   a. The classroom teachers will function in such a manner so as to help build the best possible

educational experience for the middle school students. It is expected that a major part of their function will be much the same as that of a highly competent junior high school teacher. They will be encouraged to seek out and attempt new and innovative methods which stand a chance for success in order to keep the curriculum at its highest possible level of efficiency. They will accept the students at whatever level of achievement they arrive on and progress them as far as possible through a program of individualized instruction.

b. It is expected that the classroom teachers will take a more active part in the area of guidance and counseling. A more expanded program of guidance is planned for the middle school and there will be a need for their services as a part of the school guidance team.

4. Non-Certified Personnel

a. The non-certified personnel in the school will provide important auxiliary help for the certified personnel in many ways. They will function in their specific areas in order to achieve a coordinated effort in making the total school program a success. A great portion of their use will be the responsibility of the Principal.

An over-all view of the function of the middle school staff would reveal that in many ways they will vary little from those functions of a good junior high staff. Again, it should be mentioned that the main difference in function will lie in the philosophy of the individual teacher regarding the middle school. It is hoped that the teachers will be allowed the creative freedom necessary to insure the highest level of function possible. It is understood that "change" is not always synonymous with "good," but it is also felt that the middle school teachers should constantly strive to better the quality of themselves and their program. If change is

found to be better, then change should be implemented. The very nature of the middle school philosophy dictates experimentation and change when well grounded, and the staff must be made knowledgeable as to their freedoms and limits. This will fall under the responsibility of the building Principal.

One article concerning middle school staffing refers to the effective middle school teacher as a "different breed of cat," as opposed to a teacher in a traditional junior high school setting. This type of person then, must be sought and allowed to function in a manner in which he is comfortable and secure. Many benefits will come from an active, participating teaching staff and the program will grow in scope and breadth if they are allowed to use their abilities usefully, either singly or as a team. Involvement is probably the key to success in the functioning of the middle school staff.